

Montana Hearing Society Testimony to the**Senate Public Health, Welfare, and Safety Committee****in OPPOSITION to SB 132, regarding licensure for audiologists dispensing
or fitting hearing aids**

Chairman Murphy and Members of the Senate Public Health, Welfare, and Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 132, which would enable licensed audiologists to dispense and fit hearing aids without being separately licensed as a hearing aid dispenser. My name is Walt Hopkins and I am Internationally Board Certified in Hearing Instrument Sciences as well as licensed since 1981 by the Montana State Board of Hearing Aid Dispensers. On July of 1990, I was appointed to the Montana State Board by then Governor Stan Stephens for one term, and during, I believe, our third Board meeting, I was elected as Chairman. I served until July of 1993. I was then re-appointed by Governor Racicot for a 2nd consecutive term, again serving as a chairman, until July of 1996. The Montana Board of Hearing Aid Dispensers has regulated the dispensing of hearing instruments for over 35 years, writing rules for hearing aid dispensers and handling complaints from consumers, as well as taking action against Licensed Dispensers for unethical or illegal activities, ranging from fines to permanent revocation of licensure. In fact, during my two terms, several licenses were revoked, which means that those individuals can never be licensed again anywhere in the United States.

Although the Board has many functions, their major goals are to:

1. Protect and serve the hearing impaired population, many of whom are elderly, and to

2. Set high standards for becoming a Montana State Board Licensed Hearing Aid Dispenser. This to be accomplished by administering exams.

In order to be licensed as a hearing aid dispenser in Montana, an applicant must pass a national written examination and practical examination, as well as achieve 1,000 supervised training hours in hearing instruments. We must also earn 10 credit hours in continuing education in hearing instrument sciences each year to maintain our licensure.

During my two terms I have seen a number of audiologists who had recently graduated with a Masters Degree, and all of whom had passed the State Audiology Exam, which I understand is extremely difficult, fail the practical exam for licensure to dispense hearing aids. This was not and, as I understand it, still is not an uncommon outcome.

During my two terms, hearing instrument science was much less difficult, as we were still fitting the more primitive analog hearing aids. Now, well over 80% of the hearing aids dispensed are very sophisticated digital, computer programmable instruments with multiple programs for different hearing situations. These require much more knowledge and training to properly fit and to appropriately correct a hearing loss. However, if done competently, the benefit to the hearing impaired user is immensely greater than could even be imaginable in 1990.

I have great respect for audiologists and speech pathologists. They are extremely knowledgeable in diagnosing hearing and speech pathology and that is why they have a Masters Degree. They have been very well educated in MEDICAL DIAGNOSTICS and testing procedures.

I worked with Leah Jacobson, Ph.D. Audiologist, while I was still working for Prescription Design Hearing Aid Center, with Eric Ellingson. I am now working with Pat Fournier at The Hearing Place and am still practicing as a Licensed Hearing Aid Dispenser.

I asked Leah about her love of diagnostics and discovered just how incredibly well audiologists and speech pathologists serve the hearing impaired. Here are just two of many examples I could bring forth:

- I was fascinated by the ability, for instance, to use advanced medical equipment to transmit calculated sound signals into the ear of a two month old infant, and by measuring and analyzing the evoked response, in other words the sound which comes back out of the ear after it has been processed by the cochlea, which contains the nerve cells of the inner ear, and then to be able to measure that infants hearing ability. The results of this can completely change the way that child is raised and educated, all depending upon an extremely early detection of a moderate or severe hearing loss
- Or, just imagine teaching a deaf child how to speak. Speech Pathologists are able to do this!

I have, during my long career as a Hearing Aid Dispenser, spoken at length with many audiologists, usually those licensed to fit hearing aids in this state and others, and from what they have told me, almost none of them received anywhere near enough training earning their Masters Degree in Audiology to be able to competently practice in the highly specialized field of correctly fitting hearing instruments to correct hearing loss. These two fields of practice are completely different, with minor overlaps.

Being required to pass the examination and become licensed by the Montana Board of Hearing Aid Dispensers in order to legally dispense hearing aids has served the hearing impaired population of Montana, and Licensed Hearing Aid Dispensers, whether they be audiologists or non-audiologists, well for many years, and it continues to do so. For everyone's well-being I am strongly opposed to SB132.

Thank you, Walt Hopkins.

Date:

delivered by 406 827 7413
 Jan 21, 2011 Lark Chadwick
 Thompson Falls, MT 59873

PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

Exhibit No.

Date

Bill No.

To the Senate Public Health, Welfare, and Safety:

Senator Terry Murphy, Chairman Senator Jason Priest, Vice Chairman

Committee Members: Senator Mary Caferro, Senator Kim Gillan, Senator Rowlie Hutton, Senator Dave Lewis, Senator Kendall Van Dyk

Senate Bill 161, Nullify federal health care laws

AN ACT DECLARING THAT THE PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT OF 2010 AND THE HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2010 ARE INVALID, NULL, VOID, AND UNENFORCEABLE IN MONTANA; PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR ENFORCEMENT OR ATTEMPTED ENFORCEMENT

Support of this bill is important to protect the inalienable rights of all citizens under the US Constitution and the Montana State Constitution. It is shameful that it is necessary to create a law to protect the rights of Montana Citizens from over-reaching actions of the federal government into areas not granted to it in the US Constitution

I fully support SB161 and want to see it become Montana Law.

Signed:

Lark Chadwick

Lark Chadwick PoBox 1867 Thompson Falls 1/21/11
 Printed Name Mailing Address City/ST 59873 Date

Also, these additional Montana citizens support SB117 and urge this committee to further it in the process to becoming Montana law!

1. Gen. H. Coville / Gen. H. Coville PoBox 1421 Trout Creek 01/21/11
 Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

2. Beverly Coville / Beverly Coville P.O. Box 1421 Trout Creek 1/21/11
 Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

3. Ben Strasser / Ben Strasser 1630 2nd St East Whitefish MT 1/21/11
 Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

4. CONNIE M GRESS / Connie M Gress 380 Blanchard LK Rd Whitefish 1/21/11
 Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

5. Ken Gress / Kenneth R. Gress 380 Blanchard LK Rd. Whitefish 1-21-11
 Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

6. Jacob Ponick Bischof / Jacob Ponick Bischof 22 Letterman Ln Plains MT 1-21-2011
 Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

7. Julie Wolf / Julie Wolf 434 Parkway Kalispell 1-21-11
 Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

8. Steven L. McNeil / Steven L. McNeil 40257 E. Baxter Ln Bozeman 1-21-11
 Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

Date: Jan 21, 2011

Pg 2

To the **Senate Public Health, Welfare, and Safety:**

Senator Terry Murphy, Chairman Senator Jason Priest, Vice Chairman

Committee Members: Senator Mary Caferro, Senator Kim Gillan, Senator Rowlie Hutton, Senator Dave Lewis, Senator Kendall Van Dyk

Senate Bill 161, Nullify federal health care laws

AN ACT DECLARING THAT THE PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT OF 2010 AND THE HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2010 ARE INVALID, NULL, VOID, AND UNENFORCEABLE IN MONTANA; PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR ENFORCEMENT OR ATTEMPTED ENFORCEMENT

Support of this bill is important to protect the inalienable rights of all citizens under the US Constitution and the Montana State Constitution. It is shameful that it is necessary to create a law to protect the rights of Montana Citizens from over-reaching actions of the federal government into areas not granted to it in the US Constitution

I fully support SB161 and want to see it become Montana Law.

Signed:

Lark Chadwick

LARK CHADWICK POB1867, 59873

1/21/11

Printed Name

Mailing Address

City/ST

Date

Also, these additional Montana citizens support SB117 and urge this committee to further it in the process to becoming Montana law!

1. Ben Stormer / Ben Stormer / 1630 2nd St East Whitefish MT / 1/21/11
Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

2. Philip K Johnson / Phil K Johnson / Box 287 Bozeman, Montana / 1/20/11
Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

3. Zoe A Taylor / Zoe A Taylor / PO Box 202 Three Forks / 1/20/11
Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

4. Tim RAVNDA / Tim RAVNDA / Box 287 Townsend MT / 1-20-11
Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

5. LISA Wamsley / Lisa Wamsley / 2518 Fairmont Circle Helena / 1-21-11
Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

6. Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

7. Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date

8. Printed Name / Signature Mailing Address City/ST Date